

# Kyodan

*Kyodan News Letter*

THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST IN JAPAN  
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Abira Hilan, a Spanish merchant who visited Japan in the early 17th century, wrote on his Report on the Japanese Kingdom that, "the most precarious and frantic change in the Kingdom is such that any report about this country has to be thoroughly revised and corrected every year to maintain the slightest reality".

If this were true in the 17th century, how does one evaluate Japan as we move toward the year 2000?

Even at a glance the facts that unfold are beyond our imagination. For instance, the present population of Tokyo is between 11 and 15 million; however, by the year 2000 the population within a 1½-hour radius of Tokyo will be 70-90 million or, about 85% of the population of Japan.

Even by the year 1985 this figure will have already climbed to 55% of the population.

This area stretching from Tokyo through Osaka is called the "Tokaido Megalopolis". It is an area comparable to the Boston-Washington Megalopolis in the U.S.A.

This is Tokyo: the heart of Japan; the center of education; the seat of politics; the business world of this thriving nation. Statistics do not tell a complete story but they are indicative of the actual situation. The following, while concerned with education, is relative to any other area of comparison in Japan.

There are 759 Universities and Junior Colleges in Japan with a student enrollment of 1,240,000. Two-fifths of this number of students are in Tokyo. In 1966 there were 1,815,929 applicants for entrance to a university or college but only 420,512 were admitted. More than 50% of the college age youth in Japan applied for entrance into institutions of higher education.

The Student Christian Fellowship points out that the Japanese university man is indifferent to institutional religion and philosophy, and seldom has any clear position of his own. He is usually extremely critical of existing religions. Though our era of technological innovation is at the same time an







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era of secularism, this does not mean that religious questions have disappeared from the university scene. Several surveys indicate that many university professors and students hope for the appearance of real religion and are seeking the true meaning of life. Such a spiritual climate is a spawning ground for fanatical religious movements and for ideologically based student movements.

How does a church realistically face this situation? The Tokyo District contains one-fourth of the entire number of churches in the Kyodan. There are 430 churches; 520 ministers; 40,000 communicants in the metropolitan area of Tokyo.

The Kyodan churches in Tokyo with the aid of sociologists, theologians, and other research scholars have commenced a study of Tokyo and its future. An initial plan, after evaluation of preliminary reports, has been projected. This first-step planning involves the following form:

1. Planning for newly developing areas.
2. Planning for strengthening small churches.
3. Re-evaluation of existing churches in areas becoming urbanized.
4. Long-range planning for work on the fringe of the city or in rural areas.
5. Evaluation of churches showing a decrease.

Here we would like to share Tokyo Districts' thinking and planning. The guiding principle of action is that research and action shall be carried on jointly by the District at large--the sub-districts--individual churches which desire to cooperate in pioneer evangelism.

The first plan, encompasses areas in metropolitan Tokyo namely, the East, the North, and the West sections and Chiba. In these four areas 15 critical places have been chosen for action and/or further study. These areas all have some common points but, at the same time, geographical, sociological, and financial points of difference.

One common dominating influence is that of transportation; the railroads; the buses; the highways; and on an international basis the new Tokyo airport. By and large, these areas can be divided into:

- residential districts
- industrial and residential districts
- complete new towns (cities)
- new cities with populations ranging from 50,000 to 400,000 persons, being built on what is now the outskirts of the city but upon completion will become an integral part of the city itself.

The primary result of two years of study and planning is a Christian approach being made in nearly one-half of the selected 15 sites. Funds have been made available through the resources of individual churches and district budgets, but all work is under the direction of the District and Sub-District.

The problems are massive.

--Japan has long considered evangelism as related to rural and city people. How do you speak to the rural person who has only recently become a member of a sophisticated new city?







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--Land is at premium prices--Do you buy land, erect a building and carry out traditional programs? Japan is finding that this may be not only expensive but outmoded. As the Moderator of the Kyodan has stressed--"evangelism cannot be related only to funds available--we must seek and find ways of proclaiming the Gospel that do not cost money".

--Kiyomi Morioka, associate Professor of Sociology, Tokyo University of Education pointed out that one of the crucial studies must be an analyses of the influences exerted on local religious bodies by the population mobility which is the result of the growth of Japan's economy. Tokyo churches, butting against this problem daily are seeking answers.

(Materials related to the above are available upon request. The Kyodan would be glad to exchange materials on urbanization studies with other churches).

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#### SHOE-SHINE BOY WITH A UNIVERSITY DEGREE

(by Vaughan Hinton, EACC Assembly Information Officer, who recently visited Vietnam)

After eight years at Tokio's Union Theological Seminary, Yoshitaka Funato has taken a job cleaning shoes in the streets of Saigon.

Cleaning shoes is one job his education did not prepare him for, so he is being taught by a group of Vietnamese orphan boys, for whom shoe shining provides a precarious existence.

The Rev. Yoshitaka Funato is the first Japanese team member of Asian Christian Service, the Vietnam aid agency operated by the East Asia Christian Conference.

His present assignment is to provide help for the shoe-shine orphans of Cholon, a Saigon suburb. To do this he lives with them most of each day and every night. The only time he leaves the boys is in the morning when he joins other ACS team members for devotions.

He shares the boys' meagre food, their street fights, their one-room shed with its plank beds and myriad pests. Most of the time he roams Saigon's cluttered, clattering streets, one or more boys at his side looking for potential customers in the sidewalk cafes and bustling markets.

Like all 35 of the shoe-shine boys, he carries in his hand a small wooden box containing polish and brushes. The only thing that differentiates him from the other boys is the wording on his box. On its side are written the words, "Asian Christian Service--Pray for Peace".



